



Chapter 1. Overview of the Planning Process

1.1 Background

Connecting Casper is the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) prepared by URS Corporation for the Casper Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Casper MPO includes the City of Casper, Towns of Mills, Evansville, and Bar Nunn, and portions of Natrona County.

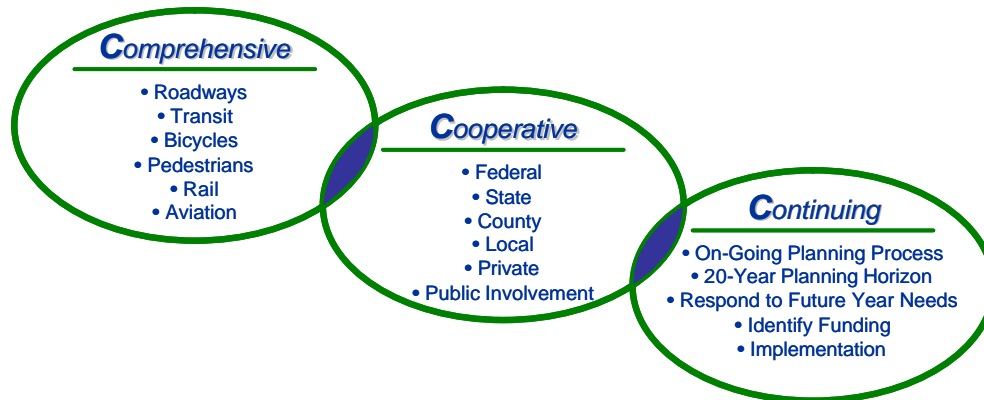
Connecting Casper represents a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing planning process for the Casper Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The LRTP analyzes existing and future year roadway conditions, transit operations, non-motorized facilities, rail operations, and airport operations. A number of specific recommendations to address transportation deficiencies through the year 2030 are identified in the LRTP, but more importantly the plan is intended to be flexible and capable of responding to change. In a sense, *Connecting Casper* is a work in progress and not a finished product. Over the next twenty-five years the area's demographics will shift, priorities will change, and new technologies will develop. This LRTP, along with future updates of the plan, will help the Casper Area MPO plan for the ever changing dynamics of the regional transportation system.

Connecting Casper analyzes individual transportation modes but also stresses the interrelationships between modes and encourages the integration of the various transportation components into a comprehensive system to meet the mobility needs of all the area's transportation users. Perhaps most importantly, the LRTP reflects the vision and direction of local officials, relevant agencies, stakeholders, and the general public. From the beginning of the LRTP planning process, a proactive public involvement process was undertaken to provide opportunities for the public and stakeholders to be involved. Finally, the LRTP is designed to be financially realistic. The recommendations are based on projections of available revenue and do not assume any significant increases in funding will be available beyond current levels.

1.2 Metropolitan Transportation Planning

The development of the LRTP is a critical component in complying with metropolitan transportation planning requirements. Part of the metropolitan transportation planning process involves the 3 “C” planning process as summarized in Figure 1-1. Simply stated, the planning process should be comprehensive and evaluate all modes, should be cooperative and include all stakeholders, and should be a continuing or on-going process.

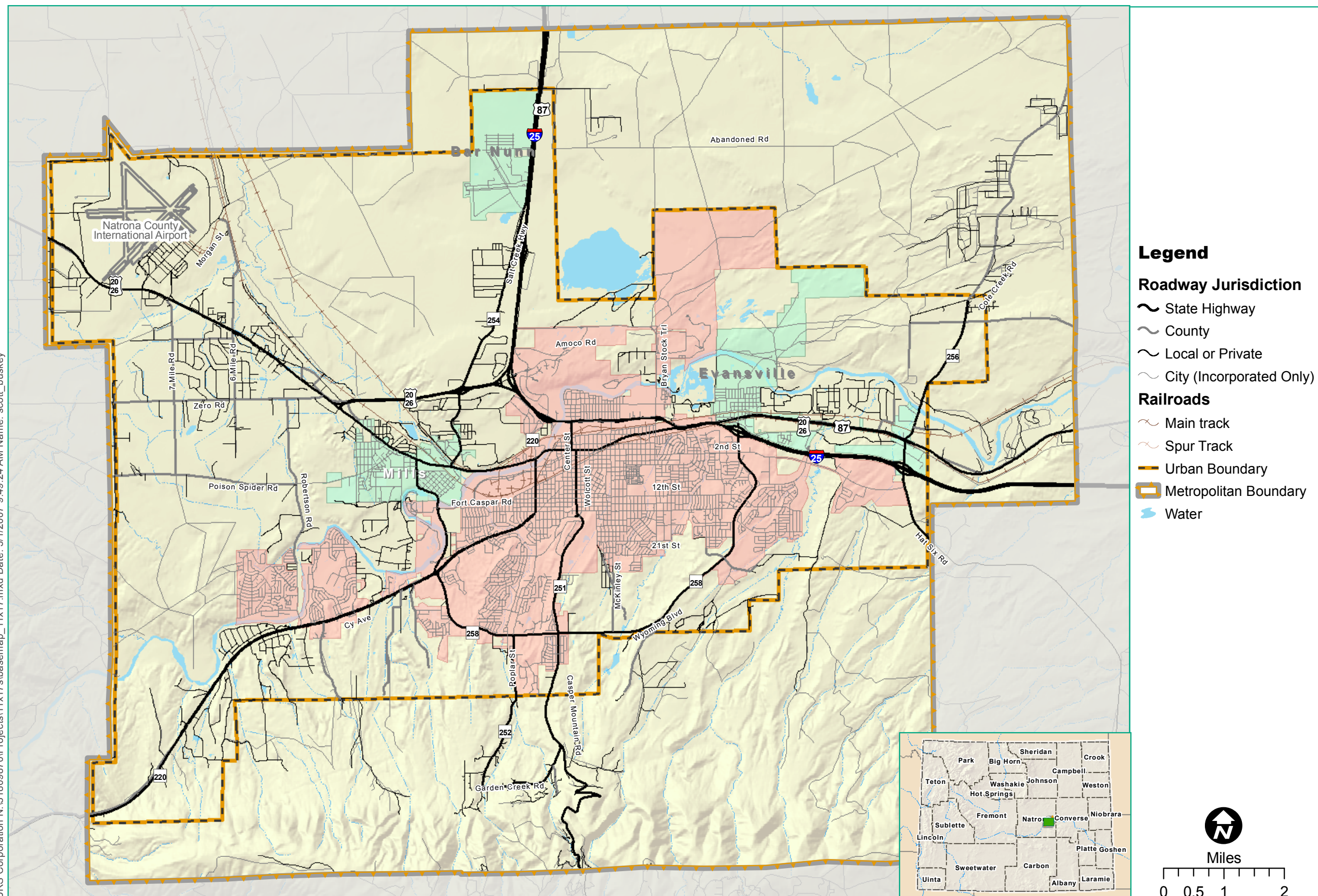
Figure 1-1. The 3 “C” Planning Process



1.2.1 Casper Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

In 1980, the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau recognized the City of Casper and surrounding communities as a Standardized Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). As a result, the Casper Area MPO was formed. The MPO includes the City of Casper, Towns of Mills, Evansville, and Bar Nunn, and portions of unincorporated Natrona County. The Casper Area MPO consists of the following geographical boundaries which are displayed in Figure 1-2.

- **Urbanized Area Boundary** – Established by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and updated every ten years as part of the U.S. Census. Defined areas include a central city and contiguous territory that combined has at least 50,000 people and a density of over 1,000 people per square mile.
- **Urban Area Boundary** – This area must include all of the Census Urbanized Area and can be expanded by coordination between state and local officials. The Urban Area Boundary is typically updated every five years in conjunction with the LRTP update. This boundary is used to determine which projects are eligible for urban or rural monies.
- **Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Boundary** – The MPA must include all of the Urbanized Area and should include all contiguous areas that are forecast to become urbanized during the time frame covered in the LRTP. This boundary is used to determine which projects are included in the MPO Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and are therefore eligible for federal funding.



Casper Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Casper Metropolitan Planning Area

1.2.2 SAFETEA-LU

On August 10, 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law. With funding for highways, highway safety, and public transportation totaling \$244.1 billion, SAFETEA-LU represents the largest surface transportation investment in our Nation's history.¹

SAFETEA-LU addresses many challenges facing our transportation system today such as improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in freight movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting the environment. Prior to SAFETEA-LU, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) set the direction for addressing transportation needs. SAFETEA-LU builds on upon these pervious programs to further maintain and grow the nations' transportation infrastructure.

1.3 Goals and Policies

Goals and policies are an integral part of the LRTP as they set forth a vision for the area's transportation system. The goals and policies for *Connecting Casper* are the result of a public involvement process and meetings with the MPO technical committee to help identify important issues and establish specific guidelines for the area's transportation facilities.

Goals are very general and pertain to area-wide or regional issues. Policies expand upon a particular goal by identifying specific actions or measures to be taken. The Goals and Policies, as adopted by the Casper Area MPO for the 2030 LRTP, are displayed in Table 1-1.

¹ It should be noted while Congress has budgeted this money, each year money is appropriated depending on revenue streams and actual amounts could vary.

Table 1-1. 2030 LRTP Goals and Policies

Goal	Policies
1) Develop a safe and efficient transportation system that provides for the movement of persons and goods within and through the Casper Metropolitan Planning Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Facilitate a high level of mobility for persons and goods within the Metropolitan Planning Area by providing connections to the regional transportation system. b) Provide a roadway system that includes functional hierarchy that appropriately accommodates access and mobility needs. c) Develop roadway geometric designs that improve the safety and operational characteristics of the transportation system and meet accepted engineering standards. d) Identify transportation facilities that should function as an integrated (intermodal) metropolitan transportation system.
2) Develop plans that meet present and future travel demands and maintain a cost-effective transportation system in the Casper Metropolitan Planning Area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide sufficient capacity in the transportation systems to accommodate existing and future travel demand. b) Develop policies, plans and programs that take into consideration both existing and emerging technologies. c) Develop a transportation system improvement plan that is cost-feasible and for which each expenditure satisfies a public transportation priority d) Develop only those projects for which funding has been identified. e) Identify additional funding sources to maintain the transportation system and develop new facilities. f) Ensure that the needs of the transportation system are adequately based on the Metropolitan Planning Area's most current comprehensive land use plan. g) Encourage and enlist private sector participation in serving the travel needs of the Metropolitan Planning Area. h) Support the establishment of a commercial and residential impact fee program.
3) Coordinate long range planning recommendations with efforts to promote alternative travel modes (ride-sharing, walking, public transit, rail, bicycles, air, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Provide incentives for and encourage use of alternative modes and management techniques for travel. b) Support the on-going planning and development of the Casper Area Transportation Coalition (CATC) to address the travel needs of area residents and to expand services throughout the Metropolitan Planning Area. c) Provide transportation alternatives in the form of transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and services for persons who cannot or choose not to use automobiles.
4) Develop a transportation system which encourages coordination with land use planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Consider the impacts of improvements to the existing transportation system and the impacts of new facilities on economic development, land use, environmental resources and social and cultural resources. b) Establish procedures and guidelines, adopted by the metropolitan governments, to preserve adequate right-of-way, through appropriate planning and funding mechanisms, for future transportation construction. c) Emphasize the preservation of historical and cultural resources and the conservation of environmentally sensitive areas to minimize or eliminate potential conflicts related to transportation improvements.
5) Support the development of transportation systems by all levels of the government and the private sector to promote community and regional economic growth and diversification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assist in the transportation planning and development activities of member jurisdictions to promote optimal transportation services in the Metropolitan Planning Area. b) Encourage on-going communication and coordination of activities between the member jurisdictions to ensure that all issues and needs are addressed as part of the transportation planning process.

1.4 Public Involvement

Public involvement is a critical aspect of any LRTP. Public involvement helps educate individuals about the transportation planning process, informs individuals about projected growth and development within the region, creates an informed community that leads to better planning, and creates a sense of ownership. A number of activities were used to inform and gather feedback throughout the LRTP process. The public involvement activities included:

- **Issues Identification Workshop** – An issues identification workshop was held at the beginning of the LRTP to gather input from local residents regarding transportation issues and deficiencies throughout the Casper MPA. Large maps were spread throughout the room as workshop attendees marked-up the maps with comments and specific areas of concerns. The workshop was held November 17, 2005 at the Casper City Hall between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Approximately 35 people attended the workshop. Figure 1-3 displays photos from the workshop.

Figure 1-3. Issues Identification Workshop



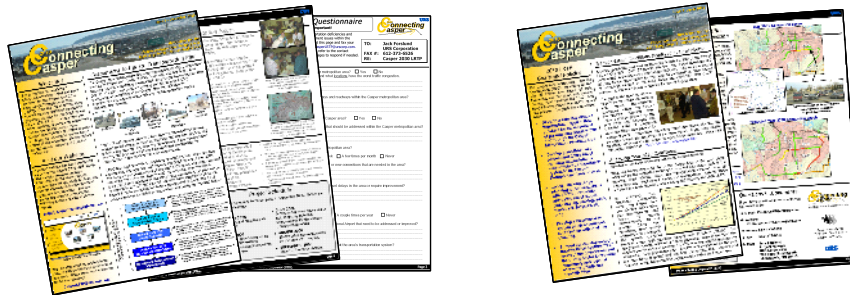
- **Stakeholder Interviews** – Thirty-five stakeholder interviews were conducted as part of the LRTP. Stakeholders represented a wide-range of individuals including the chamber of commerce; special transportation interests such as freight shippers, transit users and bicycle organizations; and local officials. A separate technical memorandum summarizing the stakeholder issues and comments was prepared.
- **Public Open House #1** – A public open house was held March 23, 2006 to inform the public about the findings of the existing transportation system conditions and the initial findings of the year 2030 socioeconomic and traffic projections. The public was encouraged to provide feedback regarding the open house materials, projected growth and development, and other transportation related concerns. The meeting was held at the Casper City Hall between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Approximately 35 people attended the workshop.
- **Public Open House #2** – A public open house was held September 28, 2006 to present the preliminary recommendations for the respective transportation modes and to obtain feedback regarding the proposed plan elements. The meeting was held at the Casper City Hall between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Approximately 25 people attended the workshop.

- **Connecting Casper Website** – A website was established at the beginning of the study to provide project information and updates regarding the development of the LRTP. The website address, which was active during the study, was:

<http://casperltp.ursprojects.com/>



- **Connecting Casper E-Newsletter** – A project e-newsletter was created to provide continuing updates on the development of the LRTP. Three e-newsletters were distributed via e-mail during the LRTP. The e-newsletters provided information regarding current planning activities, information on upcoming events, and encouraged public comments.



- **LRTP E-mail Address** – An e-mail address was established to encourage area citizens and businesses to contact the project team with questions and comments concerning the LRTP. The e-mail address, which was active through the completion of the LRTP, was:

CasperLRTP@urscorp.com.

- **30-Day Public Review and Comment Period** – The draft LRTP was made available at various locations within the Casper MPA for a 30-day public review and comment period. The draft LRTP was also available for review on the project website.

1.5 Community Profile

Table 1-2 displays U.S. Census Data (2000 Census) for Natrona County, City of Casper, and Towns of Mills, Evansville, and Bar Nunn. The data provides an overview of the area's population, race, households, employment, and travel mode for commuting to work.

1.5.1 Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice (EJ) principles include programs, policies and activities impacting low-income and minority populations. There are three fundamental EJ principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.

The need to consider EJ is embodied in many laws, regulations, and policies, including:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- President's Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (EO 12898);
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA);
- Section 109(h) of Title 23;
- The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA), as amended;
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU); and,
- Other U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) statutes and regulations.

Areas within the Casper MPA with a high proportion of low income and minority populations were identified using 2000 U.S. Census. As potential transportation improvements are considered, it is important that the projects or solutions do not disproportionately impact low income and minority populations in a negative way. Also, it is important to identify transportation projects that may benefit an area with a high percentage of low income or minority populations by improving accessibility to other parts of the community, region, and/or job opportunities.

Figures 1-4 and 1-5 identify low income and minority populations, by U.S. Census Block Groups, for the Casper MPA. The information presented here is used in later chapters of the LRTP in considering the potential impacts of recommended transportation improvements.

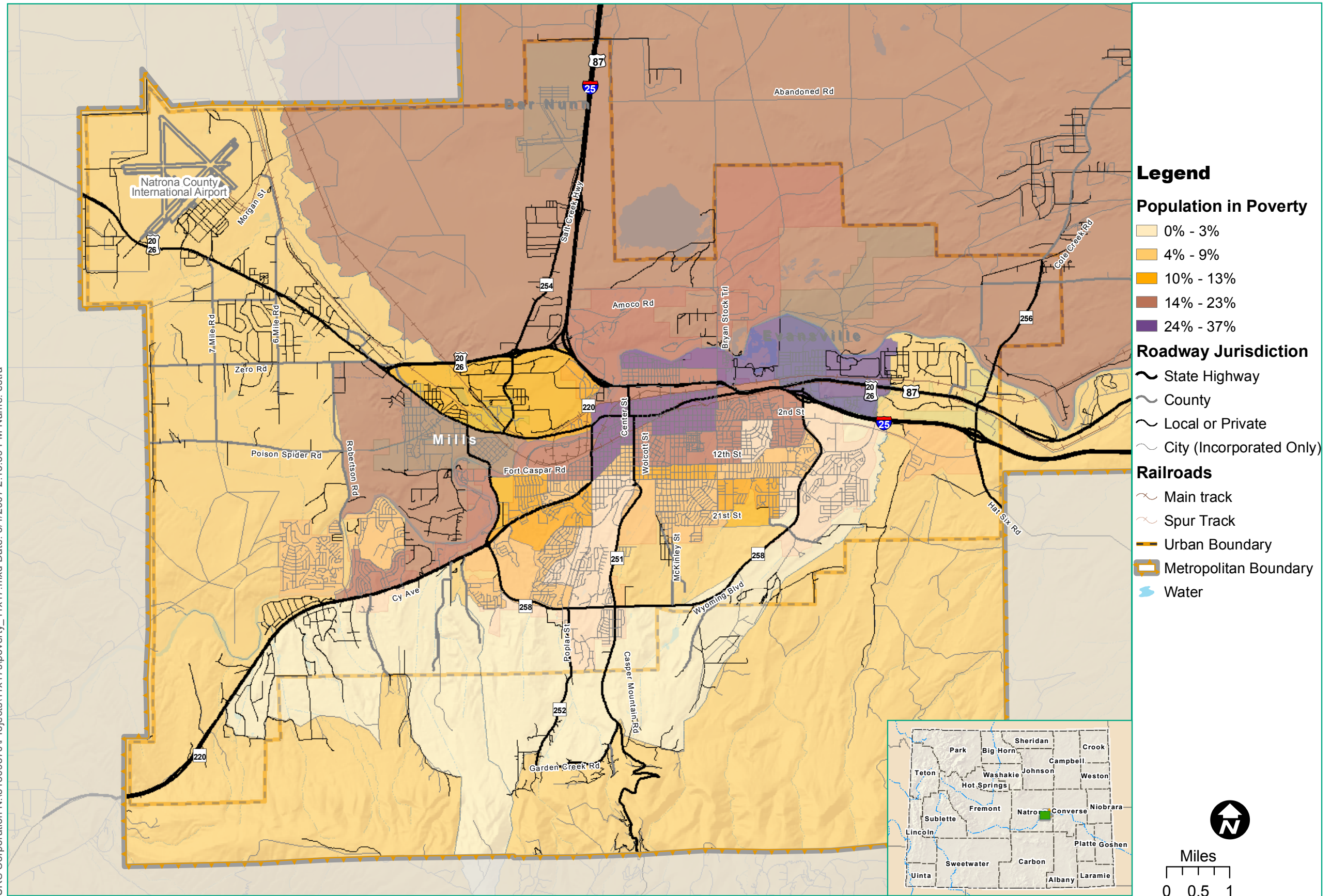
Table 1-2. U.S. Census Data (Year 2000)

Variable	Natrona County		City of Casper		Town of Mills		Town of Evansville		Town of Bar Nunn	
POPULATION	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	66,533	100.0	49,644	100.0	2,591	100.0	2,255	100.0	936	100.0
Male	32,872	49.4	24,191	48.7	1,313	50.7	1,071	47.5	477	51.0
Female	33,661	50.6	25,453	51.3	1,278	49.3	1,184	52.5	459	49.0
RACE	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One Race	65,412	98.3	48,869	98.4	2,543	98.1	2,189	97.1	919	98.2
White	62,644	94.2	46,680	94.0	2,435	94.0	2,031	90.1	878	93.8
Black or African American	505	0.8	428	0.9	12	0.5	25	1.1	5	0.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	686	1.0	495	1.0	39	1.5	28	1.2	11	1.2
Asian	277	0.4	245	0.5	6	0.2	5	0.2	1	0.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	25	0.0	10	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.5
Some other race	1,275	1.9	1,011	2.0	50	1.9	100	4.4	19	2.0
Two or more races	1,121	1.7	775	1.6	48	1.9	66	2.9	17	1.8
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	3,257	4.9	2,656	5.4	102	3.9	190	8.4	45	4.8
HOUSEHOLDS	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Average household size	2.42	(X)	2.38	(X)	2.23	(X)	2.66	(X)	2.97	(X)
Median household income (dollars)	36,619	(X)	36,567	(X)	26,717	(X)	25,375	(X)	40,313	(X)
Total housing units	29,882	100.0	21,872	100.0	1,272	100.0	918	100.0	339	100.0
Occupied housing units	26,819	89.7	20,343	93.0	1,161	91.3	848	92.4	315	92.9
Vacant housing units	3,063	10.3	1,529	7.0	111	8.7	70	7.6	24	7.1
Owner-occupied housing units	18,740	69.9	13,616	66.9	798	68.7	477	56.3	288	91.4
Renter-occupied housing units	8,079	30.1	6,727	33.1	363	31.3	371	43.8	27	8.6
EMPLOYMENT	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population 16 years and over	51,397	100.0	38,535	100.0	2,114	100.0	1,618	100.0	652	100.0
In labor force	35,081	68.3	26,343	68.4	1,320	62.4	1,147	70.9	504	77.3
Not in labor force	16,316	31.7	12,192	31.6	794	37.6	471	29.1	148	22.7
Civilian labor force	35,024	68.1	26,301	68.3	1,312	62.1	1,147	70.9	504	77.3
Employed	33,213	64.6	25,003	64.9	1,217	57.6	1,043	64.5	478	73.3
Unemployed	1,811	3.5	1,298	3.4	95	4.5	104	6.4	26	4.0
Armed Forces	57	0.1	42	0.1	8	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
COMMUTING TO WORK	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	16.7	(X)	15.8	(X)	17.3	(X)	15.5	(X)	19.8	(X)
Workers 16 years and over	32,619	100.0	24,607	100.0	1,215	100.0	1,011	100.0	470	100.0
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	26,972	82.7	20,430	83.0	990	81.5	816	80.7	377	80.2
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	3,687	11.3	2,753	11.2	134	11.0	135	13.4	71	15.1
Public transportation (including taxicab)	137	0.4	127	0.5	0	0.0	3	0.3	0	0.0
Walked	460	1.4	383	1.6	8	0.7	24	2.4	2	0.4
Other means	301	0.9	242	1.0	15	1.2	17	1.7	4	0.9
Worked at home	1,062	3.3	672	2.7	68	5.6	16	1.6	16	3.4

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

NOTE: Percent may not equal 100.0 due to rounding.

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